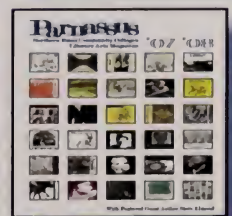
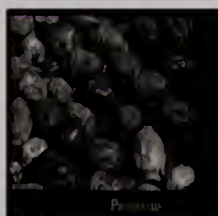
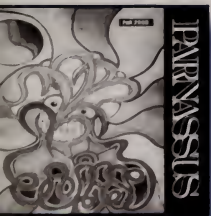
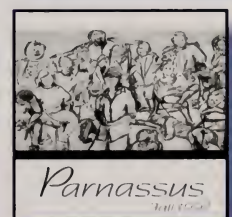
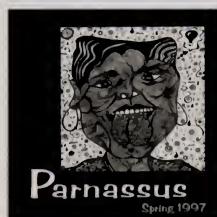
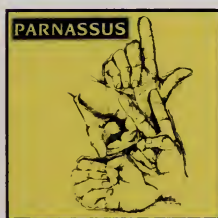
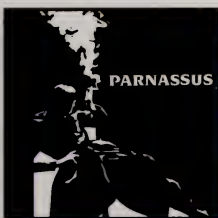


Parnassus

Northern Essex Community College's
Literary Arts Magazine

'07-'08



With Featured Guest Author Steve Almond

Thank you once more, gentle *Parnassus* reader, for gathering up yet another fresh copy of our humble literary magazine, glowing and greasy with sharpened similes, cold-pressed colloquialism, and meticulous metonymy; twittering and teeming with the unified creative forces that NECC's students can now place before your greedy, art-starved eyes. We know it's been awhile since the last issue; a year in fact. Indeed, this is the very first yearly edition of *Parnassus* to come down the proverbial pike of publication and into your hands. Your patience will be rewarded handsomely: what sits ahead is some of the best art and writing from NECC students of both the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008. We thought they'd be happier all cozy and mingled. Because this a bit of a milestone of an issue, our cover this time around reflects not new art from this past year, but rather a full collection of *Parnassus* covers from the over forty-year history of our fine tome, straight back to 1965, when both NECC and *Parnassus* were in their formative infancies. As can be seen, *Parnassus* has traveled a lengthy evolutionary path, and we hope to advance even further as we continue along.

As proof, we offer to you our inaugural featured guest writer, the esteemed and talent-bloated Boston writer, Steve Almond. Mr. Almond has published several novels, nonfiction collections, and stories, including his oft-celebrated dive into the seedy chocolate world of candy construction, *Candyfreak*. Like a morsel of diamond in your morning bowl of steel-cut oatmeal, Mr. Almond's prose generously graces our modest pages. Please enjoy his work, and to him, we offer bushels of thanks.

Additionally, we surrender our loftiest of gratitude to all who submitted work this past year; it is because of you and your brave efforts that *Parnassus* can continue to be the firstmost of first-class publications. As with the last edition, we offered a fifty-dollar cash prize each to the swiftest and sweetest fiction, poetry, and art or photography, and our choice-making was even further stunted by the enormous amount of amazing work we received. This said, our options were scrutinized, and the well-deserved champions were crowned. For poetry, the smooth lines of Aura Valdes won the slice for her poem "The Still Dance." Alex Aro, a prosaic paramour, won the fiction honors with his story "War Zone." And finally, James Barille scribbled his way into immortality with his art piece "Venus," which is featured prominently in our gallery centerfold. The highest acclaims to you three; keep up those skills of yours. To all else published, congratulations as well, and many thanks for making another *Parnassus* edition sparkle with your unique smatterings and crazy crosshatchings, your vacillating vocabularies and stunted stanzas.

Reader: do not wait one second longer. Please, immediately gorge yourself upon the feast of contents before you; don't forget to come up for a breath from time to time to pick the metaphors from between your molars. Enjoy, and feel free to let your fellow students inspire your own creations – we'd love to read them next semester.

Thanks!

Parnassus

Parnassus

**Dedicated to the specters of
Parnassus, both past and present:**

This particular edition of *Parnassus* is dedicated in full to all past participants, writers, artists, visionaries, staffs, advisors, readers, editors, and roadside gawkers who have contributed to the many past issues over the decades; thanks to you all, whomever and wherever you may be. Your hard work has brought us here, and it will continue to push us in our creative and literary pursuits.



guest author



Steve Almond is the author of two story collections, *My Life in Heavy Metal* and *The Evil B.B. Chow*. His latest book is a collection of essays, *(Not That You Asked)* published in 2007 by Random House. He lives outside Boston with his wife and new baby daughter, whom he cannot stop kissing.

Sweet Jesus

Jesus of Nazareth was on his way to the Galilee when he spotted a Samaritan woman in the next valley. She was bent over a well and she looked comely. Jesus was traveling alone. He had left the disciples down south. They were such loves. Thinking about them gave him a little shiver.

The Samaritan was one of these shy young things, just waiting. The dusty dress, the downcast eyes, those ripe hips – a familiar dilemma.

Jesus approached her.

I am of a thirst, he said. May I drink from your well?

She dropped the bucket, pretending to be surprised. My father-in-law forbids me to speak to Jews.

Jesus nodded. I have traveled a great distance. My throat is dry.

The girl stared at the ground. Her skin was the color of young olives. From where have you come?

Nazareth.

She glanced at him, with just her eyes.

Are you the Christ?

Jesus looked away, ran a hand through his hair. It was that easy.

There is an apple grove yonder, she murmured.

He could see the hair pressed under her headdress, the wanting cheeks. Her ankles shone in the sable dawn. These country maidens, they were all the same. The husband (a dullard), the stinking in-laws, the strong, neglected arms.

I shall come for you, she said.

Jesus touched the hem of her sleeve and the girl flushed.

You shall, he said.

He loved them like this: coiled in the hot chamber of their needs. He would touch her slowly, with great patience. He would tell her what she tasted of, her skin, her flesh. She would feel a pleasure so sharp as to briefly touch death. When she returned to life she would declare herself saved.

*

He traveled out of Galilee and into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan and healed the multitudes. The multitudes! He adored them! So much noise, so much pawing. Often, before he pursued the actual healings, he would climb onto a stone and fling himself right into the assembly. It was like being swallowed by a thousand mouths.

They carried unto him all those afflicted with various diseases and racked with pain: the possessed, the crippled. These were outcasts, grateful for the mortal touch and convinced of the divine. And so he lingered over them, in shaded groves and catacombs, and rejoiced in the noises they produced, the swelling of their pale throats, the dank human scents.

It was the lunatics he savored. They suffered no barrier of conduct, imposed no limits on his rites. He wanted to use wooden devices? Hot oil? A paste of figs applied to the intimate regions? They drooled and gibbered. They sobbed. They bit at everything: his neck, his fingers, his gown.

There were some children there too, palsied little orphans with huge eyes and frayed raiments. The Pharisees had showed up by this time. They had spies all over the place, just in case joy broke out.

Jesus said, suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

He laid his hands on them, dispensing gentle caresses; the Pharisees beat their wings like angry fowl.

*

The disciples all had their little proclivities. It was what made them disciples. Luke desired costumes and verse. Bartholomew public acts. Simon called Peter favored the rough cure. They were all insatiable.

He rejoined them in Jericho, at the summer palace of Zacchaeus, the publican, who was out of his mind. They recruited errant Sadducees, sybaritic Edomites, a passel of low-ranking Romans. It was a free for all. They devoured plums and wine. Nobody could see straight for three days.

Late at night, an old woman barged into the back room, where they lay with one another. She had her daughter with her. They were Canaanites.

The old woman said, Which one of you is the Christ?

Someone pointed to Jesus.

My daughter has the devil in her.

Jesus nodded.

She is wicked. Her mind has been consumed with iniquity.

Jesus said, Desire is made perverse by the intervention of shame. Do you understand, mother?

The old woman squinted into the sallow light of her lamp.

Go on, Jesus said. We shall tend to the girl.

She bowed deeply and backed out of the room.

Jesus said to the girl, Be not afraid my daughter. He rose and went to her and gently removed her dress. She stood, trembling.

Turn around please, Jesus said.

Her back was covered the long, red welts.

Jesus sent his disciples from the room, instructing Philip to bring him ointment.

There is nothing wrong with you, Jesus said. He set his lips to her wounds and they disappeared, one after another.

*

They traveled north again, to the Gennesaret region. They must have seen a dozen stonings along the way. Women mostly, adulterers. Christ went up to a mountain place, so as to be better heard.

You people, he said. Why make your hearts so hard? Is violence your only pleasure now? What has the deed of a stranger to do with you? I have given you a new commandment: to love one another, to love thy neighbor and thy enemy alike.

Shall we live in sin? someone shouted.

I am speaking now of love, Jesus said. Cease your retribution. Him that takes the sword shall die by the sword. So sayeth the Lord.

He gazed down at the crowd and noticed a knot of Pharisees to one side, their long beards all in a row. They began chanting: Catamite! Fornicator!

Jesus asked of these men, Would you trade green valleys for the stony places? If so, they await you. Dwell amid the stone, the sackcloth and ashes. The sin before Him is not pleasure, but abstinence, which flushes the spirit with hate.

The Pharisees grumbled and jeered.

Jesus laughed. Would you smite me for expressing what my heart desires? Who do you suppose filled that part with such ardor? Is it within you, my brothers, to deny His will? I have given you a new commandment.

At this, one the Pharisees said, If you are the Son of Man, let a miracle prove your lineage!

Jesus stared down at the crowd. He could see the disciples speaking quietly to selected congregants, inviting them to the after gathering. They would find a field of grass and suck the honey from combs and let the sun wash their hidden skin.

A miracle? Jesus said.

The crowd roared.

He pulled aside his raiment. This is the miracle of the body. He touched himself gently, with languor. Clouds gathered overhead and released heavy drops of wine. The wind brought gales of manna. Gaze upon me now, Jesus said. I am a man made of flesh. Come closer. Kneel before me and open your mouths and you will have me upon your tongues. You will call this holy in the great days to come.

*

They came to Bethany, where Martha lived. They had taken up with a couple of women on the journey, professionals in the sensual arts. The disciples were in high dander, but Jesus was spent. He had engaged in excessive healing. The lame, the blind, the otherwise-dismissed. They came from great distances. Everyone was talking about his loins. His loins this. His loins that. And his hands. He had terrific hands. He was a carpenter. Oh, that explains it. He was public property now.

Plans had been laid for a Passover in Jerusalem. It was time, the disciples said.

Martha was an older woman, a widow so drawn the skin beneath her eyes looked like ash; it had been years. She grabbed Jesus and dragged him to her bed chamber and emerged, an hour later, glowing like a lantern.

Jesus lay down and one of the whores came to him.

She pulled his head onto her lap and drew a philter of spikenard from the folds of her robe and began to anoint his feet.

He reached for her, dutifully.

Be still, she said.

And so he lay back and let his body go limp. She rubbed the soles of his feet, the dusty ankles. He fell into a sleep and dreamed he was walking on a field of bones. His mother was there and she came to him and kissed his eyelids. Her scent washed over him: wood smoke, myrrh, the faint traces of her womanhood. He began to weep, quietly at first, then in racking sobs. A mob was coming for him. They wanted his body, something to do with his heart. His mother folded him into her gown and carried him away, into a quiet ocean of sand.

When he awoke, the woman had slipped an oiled hand inside his raiment.

Christ shook his head.

You're all dried out aren't you, my lord?

Judas Iscariot came to the door – lovely, sullen Judas.

They are outside, he said.

Who? Jesus said.

The reviled, the infirmed. Judas grinned shyly. Will you lie about in luxury while they await your healing?

Jesus shook his head. You shall always have the poor. Me, you shall not always have.

What is that supposed to mean?

Jesus felt the stone of fatigue upon his forehead. He made no reply.

*

Then Jerusalem. What a grand calamity! He entered the city in a silk vestment, while the mobs set upon him. The streets were crooked and choked with offal. Merchants stood before their stalls, shrieking prices. Soldiers marched about in brass breastplates, cuffing the lame. Donkeys brayed and pissed where they stood. Traders thronged the gates while above, on the verandas of the terraced homes, officials of Rome drank from silver cups.

They came to the Temple. All manner of commercial agent was on hand to greet wealthy pilgrims. Moneychangers lined the stairs, lewd men in the shadow of the lintel. Jesus had quiet worship in mind, but that was impossible. The agents tossed free baubles at his feet and asked after the needs of his followers. They huddled around him with long fingers. The high priests watched all this from near the tabernacle, in skeptical array.

After a few minutes, Jesus told his disciples he had seen enough. Do not speak to me of any agenda. This is revolting.

A crowd had formed at the bottom of the stairs. They wanted to touch Jesus. They wanted to be healed.

Jesus spoke to them about renouncing their worldly goods, but they were frantic for his body, his touch, which they had linked, however foolishly, to the brief miracle of wealth. Who could blame them? These were the city poor, hardened by a proximity to luxury. The moneychangers continued to bellow the going rates.

Jesus looked upon the gilded city which, as a boy, he had dreamed a place of God, and his anguish turned

red. He leapt for the moneychangers and began tipping their tables. Coins of gold and silver spilled onto the stone: the music of lucre. The rabble descended upon Jesus, the coins, the disciples, while the Romans, summoned by the high priests, leaned in from the edges with bronze spears.

This was where Jesus did his best work. The disorder energized him. He shucked his robe and threw himself into a complicated embrace involving three sinners and at least two lepers.

*

He was naked again on the Mount of Olives and again in the Valley of Kidron. This is what he did, who he was. He believed in love as a revolutionary force. The body expressed what the spirit yearned after. It was a question of liberation.

On the eve of Passover, Herod sent for him and the disciples lamented.

But Herod, afflicted with gout, was smitten at once. They spent a long afternoon in the palace salon, kissing fools, giggling, a milk bath in the copper tub. Such a pair. Herod with his pendulous belly and beady eyes, Jesus so handsome it hurt to look at him. This was his unique talent: he saw past the corporeal, the black gums, the foul aromas of age and labor and disuse. He loved the unlovable with a powerful, soothing intimacy.

Herod insisted Jesus observe Passover at his home. But Jesus stole away to join his disciples. They took the meal in a libertine fashion, with much reclining, a surfeit of wine, rich foods. Jesus spoke of Moses with exceptional tenderness. He was visibly upset at the notion that such a man would die with the land of his dreams in view.

Your fate will be altogether greater, said Simon called Peter.

Jesus stared at him for a moment.

No, he said. The land I dream of resides in a hidden cavern of the heart. Ecstasy is the final terror of man, the unknowable place, and so he has made God the guardian of his misery. Yea, though I have come to light a fire on the earth, the wood lies damp through, for it is easier to strike another dead than to accept the depth of our want.

The disciples, hearing this, began to object. They feared Jesus had lost hope. But he quieted them, saying, Please, my brothers, do not despair of the truth. I have been sent as a prophet of love, but I shall die

as a martyr of shame. And still I say to you, who are most beloved to me: we have this night! We have this night and the blue hours after!

Jesus looked up from the table. Thaddeus and James were crying tenderly. He uncorked another bottle of wine and took a long swallow. Come now, my brothers. Let us rejoice in our brief human span.

*

The high priests had spoken to Pontius Pilate by this time and they issued a warrant for the arrest of Jesus, the Nazarene. Sedition. Obscene crimes. Inciting the populace. Silver had seduced Judas Iscariot.

Jesus knew what was coming. He was the Son of Man. Of course he knew.

While his lovers slept, he slipped away and wandered into the quarter of the city considered unsuitable for men of God. He lay with the beggars and thieves, the whores and widows, the wretched poor. When he touched them, they came to bloom like the flowers of the desert.

At dawn, he entered the Garden of Gethsemane, where he had arranged a final tryst. Judas wept bitterly; Jesus licked his tears away. They made sweet, slow love amid the watching trees, whose white blossoms dabbed at the raw dawn.

Then came the sentries, and after them the men of the legions. They dragged his body away and the rest of the story staggered on. This was what men desired in a savior: proper agonics, a bloody parade, thorns and vinegar, a piece of meat on a stick.

That was okay with Jesus. His spirit had ascended at the moment of his climax with Judas, and he spent the rest of time suspended in the midst of that sensation: total joy, total forgiveness. He knew they would render his story a public murder. It would become a receptacle for the old human verities of fear and loathing.

Still, on a rare occasion, he missed earth. He missed the suffering. He missed the song of weeping. He missed the underside of the clouds. He missed the dumb hope and sweet confusion, the radiant dreams of each heart before ruin.

poetry





The Still Dance

by Aura Valdes

Today I am in the Still Dance
The bitter and the sweet
The movement of my own sway
Ankle catch and knee bend
As a train rolls by.

Like the name implies
I am finding movement in the quiet of closed eyes
Trusting instinct,
Reflex
To catch me from
the
falling
out of my own way,
out of my own armor,
Tiredness, joy, sadness,
Anger,
“Need to be right”,
Compassion,
And surrender.

In returning to me
I am given gifts once lost
memories once dangerous
now shaken out
moved thru,
Witnessed and held
as I am held.

What does this all mean?
Is there a pearl beneath my tongue?
a morsel in my tears?

I say Yes.
I am that speck
I am that sand
And the Still Dance
becomes a great ocean.

Under my Skin

by Aura Valdes

I feel you washing my hands
The calm of your stance
The embrace of a warm cave
Whiskers tickle
Tease
Create new memories
Challenge old ones
Under my skin.

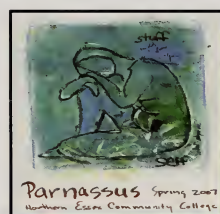
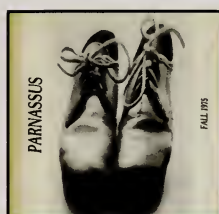
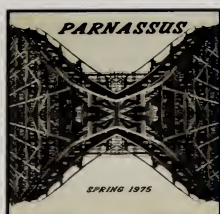
Eyes open
You are wounded and mortal
In this everyday dance
With steel
And the grind for dollar bills.

Imagining the crimson color
From your beating heart
Draws tears to my eyes
But not really
Just a feeling
Under my skin.

The realization
My soft lover
Is really human
A balance of muscle,
Working hands.
Twenty years greater than the history
Of my brown body.

Breath and tongue
That pulls me undone
My lip
Is
A fish out of water
With you
Under my skin.

Tonight,
I will feel, feed,
Read and create
More than just assignments
Of task and toil



For Grey

by Diannely Antigua

We sit on this wooden bench of mourning
that overlooks the scene of fog rising from the river.

I ponder a world of grey, a world of combination and compromise,
a world of no absolutes, no right, no wrong, no never.

Grey – pale like the straw of your hair,
like the smoke of your breath, of your shiver.

Yes, grey, like the ashes of a forgotten fire,
the soot like smudges of glittering silver.

I wish we could be like that fog, a perfect mix
of cloud and rain, but we are black and white – dissimilar.

I gaze at the antique sky, cracked and faded
with age, but yet an everlasting grey luster.

In this world of yes and no, of night and day,
I yearn for the maybe, for one color.

The Reading of the Thread

— verse inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry

by Anthony Gan

Before us is the reading of the thread.
This tapestry and its portrait of Medieval humanity.
All these things are together read,
Into the vision of a treacherous and insidious reality.

What speaks beyond the cursory visitation.
If there were ever a dreary mess of chore-tourists dragging their feet.
But it is boredom itself that will claim defeat.
When the imagination is the muse of this occasion.

The attitude is thus, an eye for fable.
This posture is a plus: a mind for dreaming.
A suspension of sorts, make the leap if able.
For the imagination is the throne of a storytelling king.

What is to be said of the day dream that was woken and stirred by ringing alarm bells.
Despite this din and its noise, the mind is at ease with epic story,
Let this sleeping fool betray the day and dusk and night of the all too serious scoundrels.
In the sojourn of fantasy there is such an ephemeral and curious glory.

In the thread is our beginning to relate to the past,
And the future of wonder is alive and has begun.
Reading into this engaging tale, all in good fun.
Animals speaking with articulate tongue, actors upon the stage of questionable reals,
Stories to learn from when all is said and done.
We retrieve a bit of the campfire camaraderie feel; waiting for the proverbial pun.

Wisdom breaks the fog of ignorant inclination.
Whether fox or crow or wolf and their important occasion.
We learn that caution is the beginning of deliberation.
And that forethought and the practice
Of careful consideration will hopefully lessen blunders and their frustration.

Not lastly, a noticeable dirge is that there exists the cunning and the foolish.
The case is that our lack of sense does sometimes fool us.
And that the mistakes that we make often do rule us.

Ten sixty six.

In the name of our Lord, this first millennia; in these days of intertwined war and politics,
Shall there be praise for the victor, the champion of bloody battle?



Or the weeping of over the fool, to cry over more than an assault of wits.
There, Death's child plays often: a frightful baby and its perdition rattle.

Those who take up the banner of battle, uneasy by the waiting of the winds.
Our sky father peering at this boisterous scene of who is rightful heir.
The old pagan gods are playing dice upon the table of blood spilled forth.
The terrible significance of chance.
While in the hands of men, the divine breath is but a gasp of air.

What an armada since the time of Troy.
Gathered in spirits and the will to triumph.
The ends of this means is the fate of those who would be destroyed.
On the four winds they waited, what a weary and restless and troubled bunch.

Hours pass with Death's approval and winged lions lick their feathers,
As if these specters of a symbolic nature are speaking an ancient dialect of dominance.
Bring us Peace's scion,
Because so many soldiers are left with a bloody mess. All together,
As if they were not their own masters of happenstance,
More so that they are victims of hidden coincidence.

When the patron saints have given up hope for who is true in the eyes of God.
Let there be a note that we were merely foolish men,
Chasing a victory that was lauded perhaps by one of mankind's imperfections,
The cherishing of conquest.
All of this is not laudable anyhow by those who are beloved by angels' protection.

We are left with odds and ends, the battle field of the dead and dying.
But the future is made in these ways. The crown has passed.
Those who are lost are saddened and sighing.
Those loyal to the stronger sword-arm stand fast.

Meditations on what went wrong with proud kings and their command.
That such are like the sands of time that are fleeting,
as the grains slip through our grasping hands.
Perspective lends advice that we seek the bigger picture.
History is our evidence of folly; hindsight is our rapture.

As time immemorial passes hour by hour,
One can look upon history and to see battles and wars as part of the human condition.
How in this age there can be peace. How then, that things were more foul.
With the hope of tomorrow,
With great care do we the hands of God paint the new rendition.

Hylas and the Nymphs

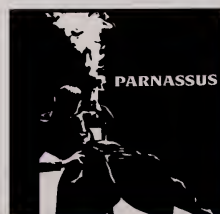
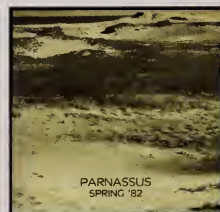
by Alex Aro

They are all staring
But she
Touches him
Hylas
Flowers in their hair
Stroking
The lilies floating
Naked and bearing
His gaze is direct
His cloak azure
Quiet
Nature and the water
Seven
Like the sins
"Come into the water"
They say
Hylas
Nostalgic, under the water
Under Mysia
Drowning
Trees and fern
No oar

The Curious Psyche: Psyche Opening the Golden Box

by Artemis Savory

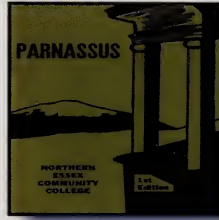
She peers curiously into the box,
praying for her love;
This another trial set by
Venus
in her search
Hope
droops like the
pink sleeve from her shoulder.
The shadowed forest slinks in
from behind,
webs of darkness collect
in the rock beneath bare feet,
and pale violet flowers
brush her legs.
The small golden box
breathes death
into the face
of Psyche.



Slammed Shut

by Artemis Savory

His room
light-colored,
soft rug cushions the
sound
as I jump
from his high wooden bed.
The center of the room is like a
f l o o d
of papers, books and
clothing.
The books on his
shelves
Are sci-fi and fantasy,
Star Wars and *The Golden Compass*.
Posing as a writer,
the boy has writing books
and writes
only
for class.
The blankets on his bed are
thin and rough
Like his body—
the flat belly, the flaming strands of hair.
His curtains are plain
cotton
checkered.
His door is kept open
a little—
Like him—
not closed, but not
w i d e open
Just there—
waiting to be slammed
shut.



Lonely Sunday

by Artemis Savory

A Sunday
church parking lots crammed
with SUVs and Volvos
an empty house
School closed
and acquaintances off with friends
The beach
cold, wet sand
beneath soft skin
The September wind
kicking up off the ocean
beach empty even of shells
flat sand
no footprints
Notebook in hand
writing as if talking to
imagined persons
The skies are
empty
of clouds and the
sun breathes
a sigh
calm lonely painless
A single pair of bare-footed prints
dot
the sand.

Build

by Meredith Alves

They frowned when they said it.
Soft, gently.
You weren't built for babies.
I gave them what they wanted.
A silent sob.
A heartless thanks.
I asked no questions,
And left.

They frowned when they heard it.
The end of the family line.
I wasn't built for babies.
They took what they needed,
My shoulder,
A pamphlet,
All the comfort I could give,
And left.

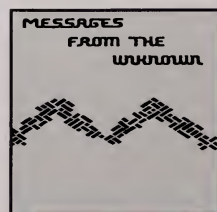
I frowned when I thought of it.
What was I built for
If I wasn't built for babies?
I never knew there were different builds.
Babies or sex or sickness.
God must've put me down
On the assembly bench
And left.

I cried when you said.
In such harsh words.
We can't have children.
You caressed me like I needed,
Loved me like I wanted,
But that is not enough,
For you or me.
So you left.

3.

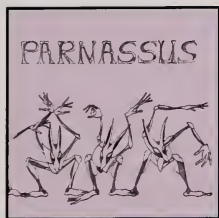
by Meredith Alves

Dear Best Friend,
I am not as soft,
As she is.
I am not as effeminate,
As she is.
But I am
A girl.
And even though I often wax poetic,
You are every poem I've kept in my head.
And even though I'm a show off,
You are every drawing that's too good to be mine.
You know I think
Love=bullshit.
But I think I might
Bullshit you.



Echoes of the Past

by Meghan Dempsey



This air is sparked with something
an energy I long ago had felt
surrounded by these overwhelming embers
tears begin to drip, as this ice starts to melt
what could be behind those eyes?
memories and feelings start to thaw
lost in a sea of almond confusion
feelings of being vulnerable and comfortably raw
reality starts to seep in through the cracks again
turn away those heated feelings before we fall
into the past
reminders of yesterday evaporate in this moment
a glance filled with something trying to make
this last

Never Took Much

by Meghan Dempsey

Your eyes, they still invade me
I still become unraveled by your touch
I'm forever tangled up in your voice
baby, you know it never took much.

Held here with no chains
Trapped with the choice to leave
Bound by the memories of yesterday
you know it never took much for me to believe.

Haunted by your caressing lips
Surrounded by your intoxicating scent
Wrapped up in your invisible grasp
you know it never took much to make me wonder what you meant.

Slowly disengaging myself is so truly hard
Lost in the question of who I can and not trust
Minutely regaining the strength I once had
you will never know this takes so much.

High Speed

by Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombardi

The train lurches forward
All who sit in apathetic anticipation
stir, shift, and look forward
then settle back to allow
vibration to move through
their bodies one roll
One spin one rail one track
at a time
The train moves forward
gaining speed
...speed
...speed
...speed
speeding to gain
the vibrations turned to hum
a single hum
that moves through the body
whipping up the momentum
of casual joy
of perpetual bliss
of moving forward
into the light
from the engineer's seat
the light illuminates the
path of speed the whistle
blowing away all danger
warning all to move away
This speed for us
is not designed to destroy
the casual passer
bye bye to the casual passer
by who apathetically interrupts
the momentum of the train
Only the engineer
can see the
can count the
can hear the
bugs being splattered

bugs being crushed
bugs being rolled over
Yet hidden from the traveler
Who spins like a top
The hum from the momentum
Inside the spinning top
With the vibration
Creating a tornado
Self-contained
Interested only in
Its path of destruction
the engineer pulls the cord
Slows the speed
As the schedule mandates
The traveler is irritated
as momentum begins to
hum moves to
vibration as vibration
moves to one roll
one spin one rail one track
the traveler
shifts and stirs and
looks outside to see
only himself
staring back at the traveler
the desire for the speed
pulses through his veins
the apathetic anticipation
replaced by the need for
the demand for the insistence on
the speed
to be pulsing through his veins
with no other travelers to
interrupt his momentum
he takes this moment to head
up the aisle
to the head and sniff another
head full of speed

To Sonia

by Richard Fahey

And the rotting corpses
And the little girls' tears
Alone without your mother
And father's last dance
Darkness; hatred; cold, oh it's so cold
To see you now, but still then
I heard you cry
Your poems cried
And mine diminishes any sense of the inviolable
Blessed you, I'm sorry
For what they've done
Rejoice in the sadness
Compelled to see
The rape of innocence
Beyond German lands
Poland a graveyard, where corpses still live
If memories of terror keep them alive
I won't forget; nor stand idly by
And let your sad tears ever dry
Lamentations must be heard
And God break my heart
For cattle cars
And Ukraine guards
And nights of broken glass
life is worthless
And no one cares
shoot your friend in the head
For passing as pretty
And Eichmann kissed a Jewess
May David's star
Never fall from the sky
Though the haze of crematoria
Sting my eye
And did they hurt you little Sonia
I'm so sorry
Forgive me little Jew girl
You did no wrong
But God's chosen still die
A cruel selection
I love you

Jellybean

by Ralph Basilere

There's a girl who I adore,
with intoxicating endospores.

She's the one who didn't swell
When I gave her my sub-terminal.

Powder blue panties in a red bedroom
Where flacid paralysis killed the groom

Baby bound me at the junction;
rocked me till my lungs don't function.

Dancing beneath the April sky
"Sweetheart, love your botox eyes"

She breathes not warning as she goes,
but in my soil her seeds she sows.

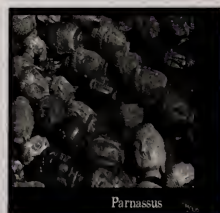
Pretty poison, cans of money,
Really loved you, but I'm all set honey.

There's a girl who I adore,
with intoxicating endospores.

At Birth

by Karina Rodriguez

Careless mind
During a time of loss
And deception
As the inner struggles
Progressed
And the thought of giving birth
Brought on angst
A being brought by love
And affection
But the other half creator
Was never present
Perhaps he never cared
Masculinity was not present
Hopeless soul in discontent
A day of hard labor
And bright sunny skies
Under a full moon night
November second was the
Occasion
Scorpio was the sign
Dark agonic night
And bittersweet sensations
As earth mother gave birth
And the pain she underwent
As this feminine brought her joy
An escape from all her pain...



Untitled

by Christopher Powell

I live in a fantasy life
I see girls on windowsills looking out the generic sunset
I meet the people I want to meet by waterfalls
I try my best to put it all together
I force everything into manageable pieces
I will hurt you because I want to be injured
I hope you're ready, because I can't stop

communication has slowly broken down
the physical has left us warm and easy
and strapped our necks to the floor
laying side by side on silk sheets
warped from years of use
but tomorrow's here in an hour, so who has time?

Untitled

by Christopher Powell

the hands are looking softer every day
and when they touch, everything's suddenly beautiful
as long as you're there, the colors are all brighter every day
bright enough to distort you

spend the days covered in snow
rubbing our hands together
but everyone's hands are warm
when has making sense felt good?

i've run out of things to talk about
i'm stripped clean of love
let another boy's love come out
and he's so warm

head strapped in front of her eyes
but if i tried, i could struggle free
and it's such a swallow feeling
shallow enough to get involved in



hydrangea

by Sarah Brent

hey my hydrangea
I could barely see you
standing there, looking like a doll
oh, you're beautiful
and what you don't know will certainly kill you
one of these days the point of your story will prick
sharper than you had intended it
oh, you're only human after all
one day I saw her
behind the old diner
picking up stones and throwing them at the wall
she couldn't catch her makeup
it was running so fast
that particular heaven with eyes rolled back in your head
never lasts
on her arms there are scars of what she used to have
darling once, you were beautiful
we collected seashells from the swamp
old dusty animal bones piled up to the top
of our little black plastic dollhouse
in the eaves of our old house
but then they came and took it all away
we pretended we were flamingoes
trapped in a tourist's snow globe
so long we believed our lie and shivered from the cold
let's run away I sighed to you
to mexico or Arizona
somewhere we can get away from all this snow
but it followed us there and you didn't look back
full speed ahead, I am certain you'll crash
darling girl, do you know that you were beautiful
hey my hydrangea
I wish I hadn't seen you
lying there looking like a doll
what you refused to believe has certainly got you
the spindle it is covered in blood
but life is simply grim
never a fairy tale
your petals were drying, becoming noticeably frail
oh, you're only human after all
so long hydrangea, you look beautiful

Death's Season

by Corey Rappsilber

Beneath bone-colored, overcast October skies,
Cold, crisp breath grips noses, turning them red.
And temporary lanterns leer at passersby, holding secrets behind hollow faces,
And trees weep blood and gold from the reaper's loving caress,
Drifting slowly toward a Dying earth.

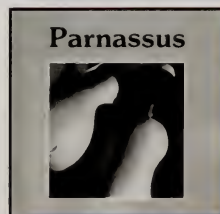
The view of the universal cycle is reversed temporarily.
Vivacity is not celebrated here today, for in this season,
Death begets Life.

Therefore,
Like druids of old, we worship the sinister and all things shadowy,
At this month's end.
Mid way through the next we lavishly feast upon the flesh of worldly beasts,
With this we fully embrace the mysterious design,
Death supports life.

Transit

by Christian Dunbar

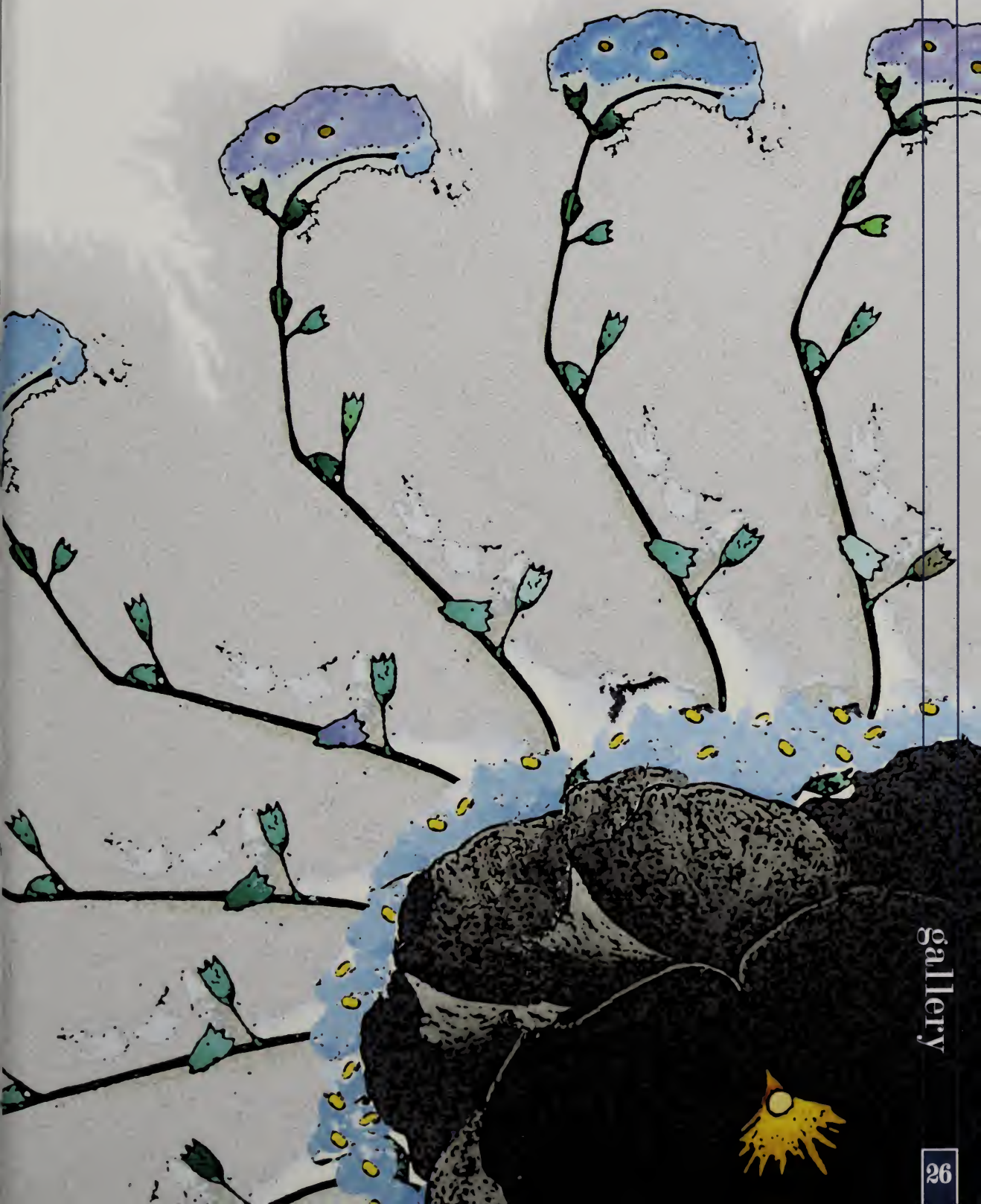
Might we speak of shadows and of days past?
Or plainly tell of the present story
Of darkest depths and subsequent glory
With requisite sympathetic eye cast?
Salutations hesitant and well met.
An embrace made of cavernous echoes
Sounding, rebounding off cold walls and yet,
Though long dormant, a feeling there still flows.
To what end do we limit our hearing
Of stranger loves tasted and debated
When still we hold each other endearing
Though our lives have long since separated?
The moments are so long and are so brief
When warmth of cherished memory meets grief.





gallery







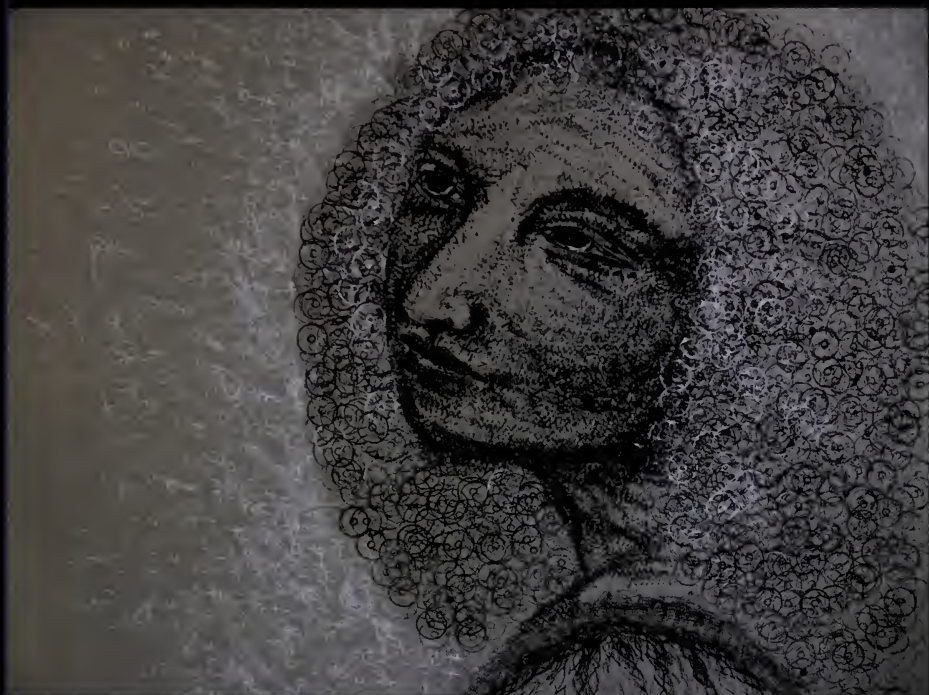
Artemis Savory



Carolyn Jarvis-McManus



Candice Cote



Cheryl Comeau



Cheryl Comeau



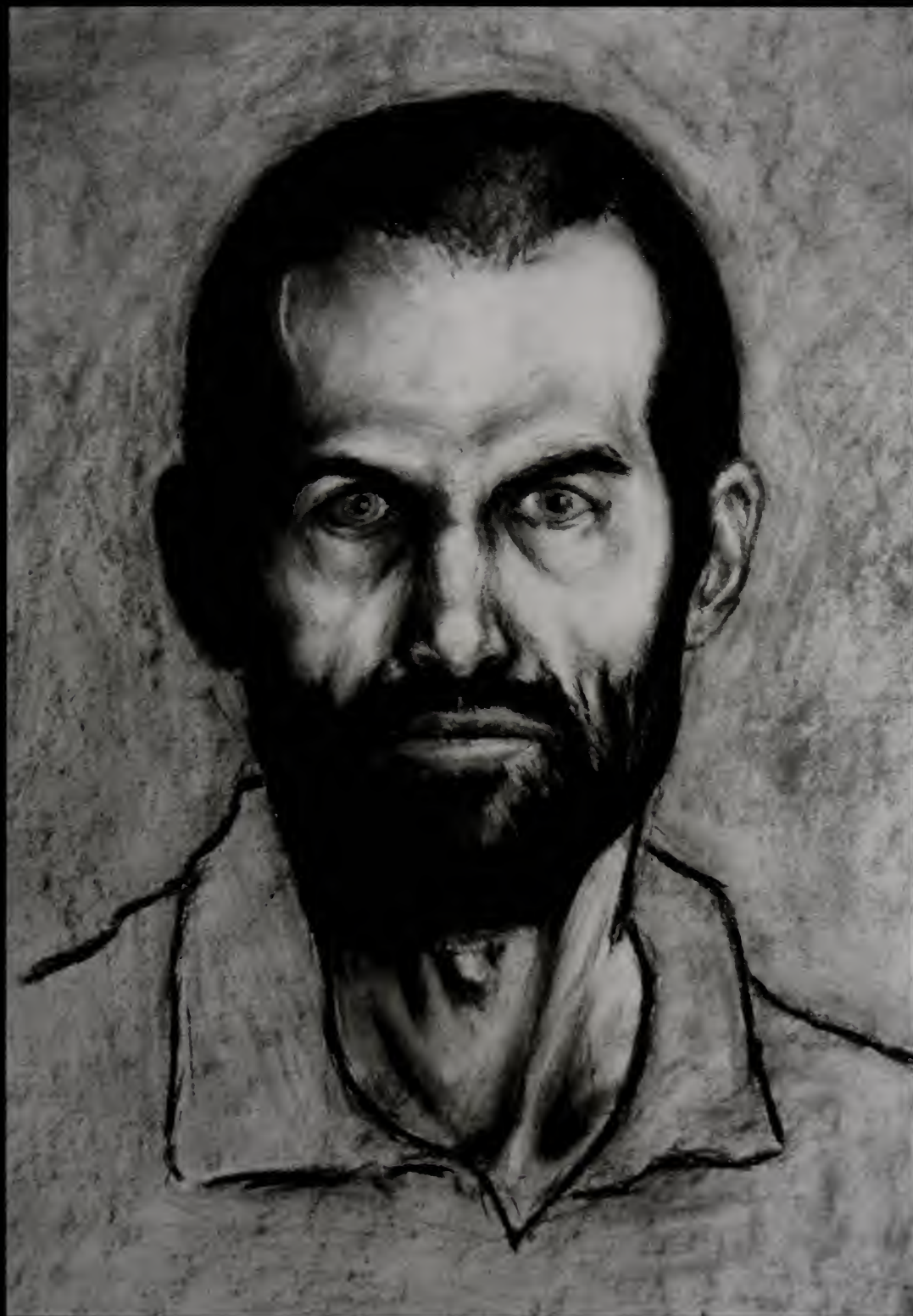
Cheryl Comeau (a study of Francisco de Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*)



Justin Ingaharro

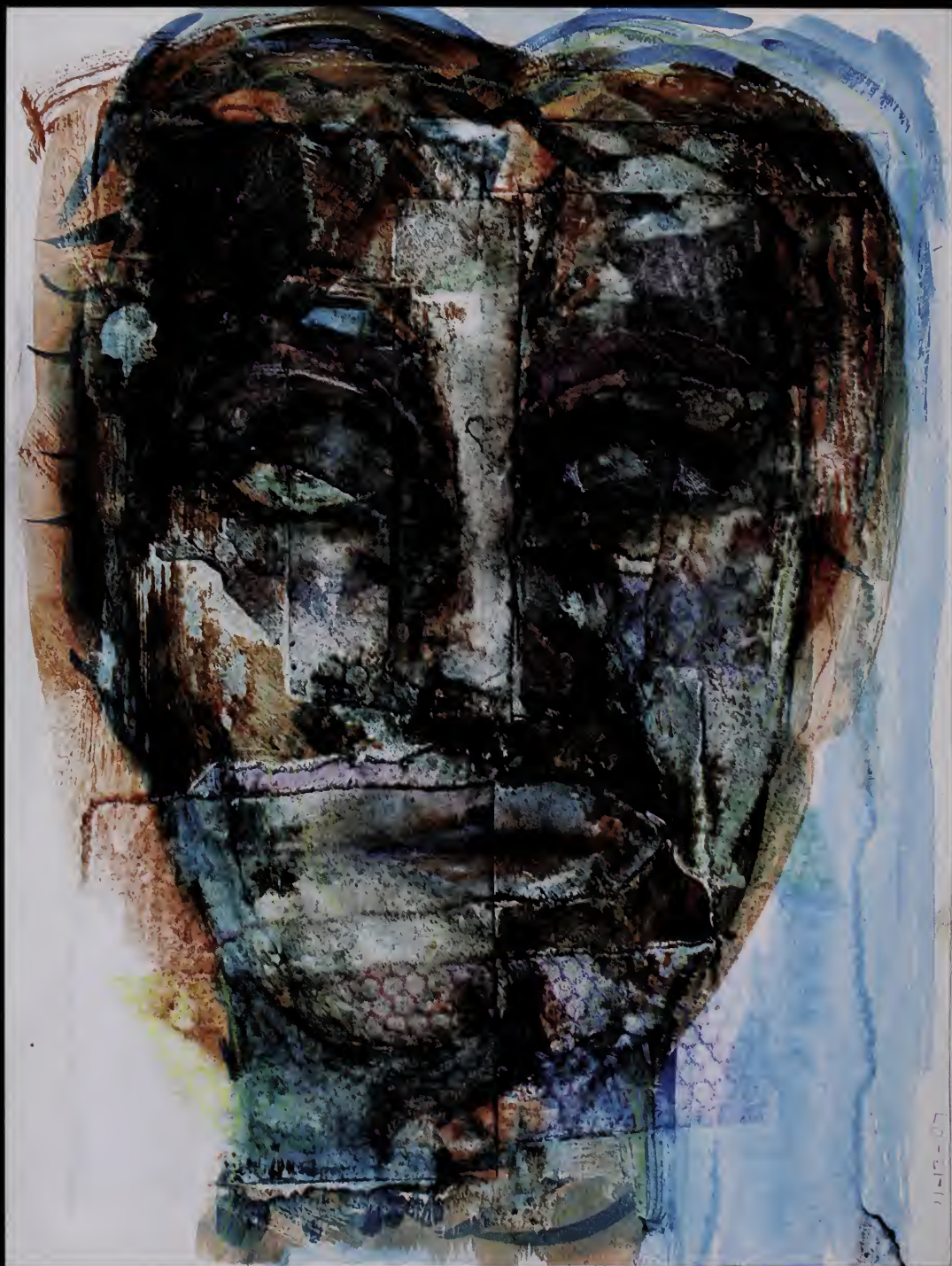


Justin Ingaharro



James Barille





Maryanne Scatamacchia



Sam McCarthy



Sam McCarthy





Sophia Herring



Sophia Herring



Sophia Herring



Jessica Jensen



Jessica Jensen



Jess Beckford



Joel Pecci



Kaclyn Salerno



Lindsay Meredith



Lindsay Meredith



Linda Germain



Linda Germain



Linda Germain



Jeff LeBlanc



Jeff LeBlanc



Creative nonfiction

What's Your Point?

by Tom Whalen

I remember being so excited the night before our fishing trip that I would lie awake until all hours of the night, tossing and turning until finally, sometime past midnight, I'd drift off to sleep.

Gently stirred from slumber, I quickly readied myself and stole into the kitchen where my father was loading the cooler with soft drinks, ice, and the sandwiches we had made the night before. It was four a.m. Saturday morning; the first weekend of spring that was warm enough for my father and I to load up the car and head to Salem Willows. We had already loaded drop lines, rods, tackle box, fillet knives, and the bait the night before so all we had to carry was the cooler and his large thermos.

"Are you ready?" He picked up the front end of the cooler.

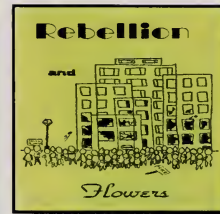
"Ready, dad," I said, struggling with the rear as we carried the cooler out to the car.

I climbed into the passenger seat as he started the car and we made our way toward the harbor. "I just have to make one stop—for my coffee."

I cinched the seat belt around my waist and stared out the window. "Sure, dad." The street lamps cast an eerie glow into the early morning hours; I saw shadows scurry across

lawns and what were boulders or brush by day were now sleeping beasts of the night. I would hold my breath as we passed so as not to wake them. We drove the distance in silence as I peered into the night getting accustomed to the darkness beyond. With the exception of an occasional car the streets were vacant as he cruised through the neighborhood, oblivious to the monsters lying at bay. Once at the club (I knew that's where we were going) it was routine: "Hey, Jimmy," he'd say. "We're going fishing today, how about the Irish brew for the thermos?" With a wink and a nod Jimmy cheerfully set down a mug of coffee and went off to fill the thermos. Dad drank quickly; the early bird got the worm, so to speak.

Weeping willows swaying in the morning breeze were the first signs of approaching Salem Willows; after passing two baseball fields we entered the parking lot, surrounded by an arcade and a picnic area rife with trees. Litter pushed along by unseen hands swirled beneath teeming barrels as seagulls fought over morsels of food. A short walk toward the end of the point brought us to the pier as light glowered from the eastern horizon; here more gulls hovered overhead screeching into the morning, waiting for visceral tidbits from the fishermen gathered below. I watched dad load the gear into the orange rowboat, and although it was tied at the bow I held fast to the side to keep her



steady. After everything was in place he swung himself onto the stern seat and held the float with one great arm. “Okay, let’s see if this is the year.” He was a big man who toured the world with the Navy; he held us in awe with his tales of adventure in exotic lands and the stories behind his tattoos. I wanted to be just like him. He had said as long as I could firmly plant my feet I would be able to row.

“Today’s the day, dad, I can feel it.” I stepped into the boat and sat facing him, planted my feet, and breathed deep the scent of brine. I couldn’t tell if I was shaking from the coolness of the air or the exhilaration of finally learning how to row; I beamed as he picked up his thermos and smiled.

“First off, untie us from the bow, then take the oars from the bottom and put them in the tholes.” Noting my look, he pointed to the u-shaped bracket in the oarlocks. I jumped out to untie from the dock. Seated again, oars in place, he shoved off from the pier. “Sit in the center of the seat and get a comfortable grip on the oars. Okay, arms extended, lean forward, dip your oars and pull with your arms as you lean back, making sure the blades are vertical.” Oh boy, here we go. I really wanted to make a big impression; after all, it sounded easy enough when he explained the times before. I leaned forward with my arms extended,

dipped the oars into the water and pulled back with all my might. Unfortunately, I overlooked the positioning of the blades, and as I pulled back the right blade tore through the water, stopping only when the oar hit the side of the boat splashing water onto the rear seat – and dad. I started stammering apologies and felt like a fool, but he just wiped his face, smiled and reached for his thermos. “Not bad for your first try, but watch the positioning of your blades; vertical, vertical.” That was not the only time he needed to wipe his face that morning.

Struggling with the oars I realized this was more difficult than first appeared. My timing was off, the oars kept slipping, my arms were beginning to wear, and my back was screaming – but I rowed on, listening to barked commands as he leaned against the transom enjoying the ride: “Straighten your back, head up, watch the point, pull evenly, look over your shoulder, oars vertical, feet flat.” Not limited to and not necessarily in that order. I could hear the impatience in his voice as I toiled to keep her steady while staying to my point, but something was wrong and I stopped rowing. It seemed I wasn’t as far as I could have been; actually, instead of being in line with the pier we strayed left;

far left. He smiled knowingly. And then it dawned on me; I remembered him stressing the importance a good point is in keeping a straight run out into the harbor. I apologized, feeling like an idiot – again – and explained I had been using a rowboat that was hugging the shore. “I knew you’d figure it out sooner or later,” he said, setting down his thermos. “Experience only comes through trial and error; now if you’re done playing why don’t we go get us some fish?”

Filled with determination, I chose a stationary point on land and began my trek into deeper waters. By this time the sun cleared the horizon and I could feel the warmth on the back of my neck as outboards and lobstermen gave us wide berths, but their wakes were enough to throw off my timing. Our boat would crest during my stroke causing the oar to skip across the surface, dowsing the rear of the boat again; now I know why he brought the large thermos. Ignoring the burn of both hands I finally got my rhythm on and managed to get us out far enough to where we could drop our lines and cast our rods, but at great costs to my body. My back was sore and my thighs were tight and my arms were burning and my hands were blistered – there was no way I was rowing back! “This looks as good a place as any; anchor’s aweigh.” His words were music to my ears.

Scrambling over the seat to the bow, I hefted the anchor and eased her out, letting my hands enjoy the chill of the water before returning to my seat.

“Aye, aye, captain.”

Baiting up the leaders we dropped our lines over the side until they hit bottom, secured them, and then baited our rods. I maneuvered into position for what may have been my first cast of the season after I had watched him throw a perfect strike; I was confident mine would be satisfactory. Waiting for the right moment, I launched my rod one-handed and watched as my line sped out of the thimble – a beautiful cast – then suddenly drop straight into the water. I looked down and saw my line balled up at the mouth of the reel and realized I had forgotten to set the drag. After several tortured minutes of line wrestling he relieved me of my burden and taught me to cut the tangled mass and splice the line back together.

I don’t remember if we caught any fish that day, but I’ve never forgotten my lessons in basic seamanship and the look in his eyes at the end of that day.





Compost Bouquet

by Artemis Savory

She comes into my house and tries to take her boots off in my doorway—bits of dirt fling all over the place and I shoo her outside, to take off the muddy things on the stairs. She can really irk me at times. I go back through the living room and into the kitchen and continue reading something on the table. Suddenly she's in the room wearing that crazy grin that she always has whenever she's about to surprise someone, or do something stupid.

"Mom, I got you something." She swings her backpack down and I cringe as it hits the linoleum like her brother's weights. She starts unzipping it and I walk away, so that I don't have to look at her muddy, baggy pants, or the bushy hair that she refuses to blow-dry. I turn back around and she's holding a bouquet of flowers out to me.

I take them, truly surprised for once, and am at once overcome with a feeling of gratitude – my daughter bought me flowers! But, wait a second. I look down at them. It is made up of a bunch of different kinds; roses, tulips, baby's breath, and many other types are included in the arrangement. Some of the flowers' petals have wilted, and a couple of stems are bent, but I decide to let it go. She might have bought them.

"Thank you so much," I think I told her. Her grin is getting larger, and she's hopping from foot

to foot, like she's ready to burst. Whatever it is, it can't be good. I don't want to know, so I turn around and fill a vase with water, and drop the stems inside of it.

"Do you wanna' know where I got them?" she asks. I look back at her and purse my lips.

"Well you bought them, didn't you?" I probably reply.

"Well, so we were, like, out in the fisheries building and it was incredibly boring, so I decided to go outside, and in the compost pile, what do you know, but I find a bunch of perfectly nice, wonderfully fresh flowers. And here they are! Isn't that awesome?" If I was her father, I'd be high-fiving her right now. But I'm not impressed.

"So, you got me a bunch of flowers out of a compost pile?"

"Well, they're really nice."

"Thanks, hon." I hold back a sigh. Alita can tell that she shouldn't have said anything – that she should have just kept silent, but that seems to be one of her unstoppable problems. She leaves the room quietly, picking up that heavy bag in one swift movement and going to her room, where she shuts me out.

fiction



War Zone

by Alex Aro

Her mouth was a war zone, with pistols for teeth and a knife for a tongue. She'd never been to a dentist, but was very familiar with gun polish and a rag. She didn't know the pain of a cavity but she'd be damned before she got rust.

She was the life of the party. Open windows and open booze, she stood on tables and danced. There were always thick black lines racing around her eyes, her skin a creamy pale and her hair fell in tangles that bounced against her puffy cheeks, while her dress flirted with the air above her knees. Sometimes the boys would throw wine glasses in the air and ask her to shoot at them, and she would. Bam, bam! Broken pieces embedded in the carpet and everyone clapped and yelled. "More! More!"

Sometimes they placed fruit on their heads and shoulders and trusted her in their drunken state. Apples exploded and oranges burst all over as she twirled; the bullet spewing ballerina. When she got too drunk her tongue lazily hung and cut up her lip. That's when she sat and the party would too, eyes off the table and to the floor, cans rested and slowly as the night wore on bodies would drift to sleep.

When the sun crawled in through the open windows and spread across the floor, she woke up with blood clots on her chin. There was a haze across her eyes that made the room sparkle like empty snail shells glued to the walls. She looked around at the boys, how they curved around the furniture and rested in crime scene chalk fashion. There were other girls too; she didn't know their names but they followed the boys like thunder.

Some mornings when she was the only one awake, she would go outside and set up beer cans along the brick wall in the backyard. This morning however, she just sat on the wall; her

feet whipped across the grass back and forth while she rested her chin on a clenched fist and thought about what else she could shoot. There were birds dancing across the telephone wires and squirrels ran across tree limbs. There was a rotting tomato garden and a statue of an angel that overlooked a birdbath. She looked up as a plane disrupted the morning silence and she traced its jet black trail with her mouth. When the smog cleared and the clouds returned, she wondered if she could ever shoot them down and blanket the world in white.

As she stood up one of the boys came out through the backdoor. He staggered over towards her, his hair disheveled, and molested the air. He leaned his hand on the birdbath to keep himself balanced and he smiled. "Hey."

"Hi," she said.

"That was some party last night huh?"

She nodded. "Yeah..."

Slowly, he sat down on the grass. She sat down too, across from him, and her skirt tickled his knees. The sun had climbed higher into the sky and the clouds moved like rush hour traffic. The rest of the neighborhood still slept. The morning song was still a slow and silent tempo and she listened as her hands pawed through her hair. She thought the boy's name was Eric, but she wasn't sure.

"I can't wait for tonight," he said.

"Mmmm," she hummed in agreement. Her hair clumped together in tight twists and she fidgeted to separate them. He still sat still, arms at his side and he stared beyond her at the wooden fence at the end of the yard. She stood when the soundtrack changed to the early afternoon and she heard car engines starting; people walked on the sidewalks and music poured from screen windows to fill the summer void.

She walked back into the house and everyone was awake, moving around on the couches and touching things that didn't belong to them. Some people patted her on the back as she made her way

to the kitchen. Some yelled at her, “Yeah! You fucking shoot that shit!”

She sat at the kitchen table and wondered if anyone here even knew her name. The only name she had heard all night was “that chick with the guns.” Sunlight dimly lit up the room, trying to push through the closed curtains. Life sprung throughout all the rooms of the house, girls showered upstairs while boys wrestled with the remote, and outside cigarettes were lit over excited banter of tonight’s party.

The afternoon wore itself out and slipped under the shady comfort of a starry blanket. The moon was bright and bore its craters proudly. As the boys dragged in booze and the girls trampled down the stairs in skimpy outfits, she was still in the kitchen alone. She thought of shooting the legs off the table, shooting through the refrigerator door and damaging the cartons inside; she thought of shooting through the windows to invite the summer night inside.

Someone came into the kitchen and touched her shoulder. She didn’t turn her head to see who it was but she smelled cheap cologne treading over a musty odor. Whoever it was squeezed her shoulder and asked, “You gonna stay in here all night?”

She pushed the hand away and got up out of the chair. “Give me a beer,” she said.

She was on the table in an hour as she danced to the deafening jams that erupted from the speakers. All around her everyone cheered, and then the boys grabbed one of the framed artworks off the wall. “Shoot it! Shoot it!”

She stopped her dancing and stood spinning. She looked at the piece of art in their hands, the intricate designs, the swirls and black smudges, the circles that might be eyes, eyes that stared through her, and the hidden message that was dried somewhere on the canvas. She swayed and the more the picture moved with her, the more it made sense. The lines connected into the pattern of a heart and the eyes

all around it watched and the black smudges like the boys and girls around her that held this art for her to destroy.

“C’mon! Shoot it already!”

The girls were as excited as the boys. They clawed at her feet and threw their arms into the air; the music never stopped. She was felt like the art up on the table, all eyes on her as they waited for her to perform, to make her message seen and heard. The heart began to beat as the boys started to throw the painting into the air in hopes she would shoot it. Up and down, the heart and the eyes were alive with pastel flair and acrylic awareness.

“Fucking, let’s go!”

She opened her mouth and everyone cheered; the music stopped and they waited for the bullets to pierce the painting. It was the boy that threw the artwork, he was first. The bullets riddled through him and he flew back into the wall. She caught the painting with one hand before it hit the ground, and then laughed with gung-ho spirit.

The boys and girls panicked and ran circles around the house, trying to wake their bodies from drunken splendor while the bullets Swiss-cheesed across the house. She couldn’t stop her laughter and each time a bullet hit the painted heart pumped violently. There were holes in the windows and outside lucky footsteps raced up the pavement. She had never been as excited as she laughed and laughed, her head tilted back and gunning the ceiling. The glasses and fruit didn’t run, they didn’t scream, they just broke.

Finally the house was silent and she closed her mouth. The heart was frantic and leapt on and off the canvas as she placed it back on the wall. She stuck out her tongue and licked the heart, slicing it open. She took a step back to admire it and wondered who the artist was.

Under The Tree

by Alex Aro

There were echoes all around them, their shadows delirious and only existing in short spurts under the breath of the streetlights. They danced as their cigarettes leaked calligraphy across the night sky and she tried to trace it with her finger. He asked her what it said and she replied, "it's a secret to the stars."

The smoke towered over them for a few moments, observing before dissipating into the darkness and she took the cancerous pen to her lips to write some more. There was a light veil of frost over the front yards of the neighborhood and the cars glistened like midnight ghosts with a message. He looked up to the stars for a moment but their lips were sealed with her secret.

She wore a polka dot party dress under her open coat, ribbons and bows snaked across her chest, and he wanted to unwrap her like a Christmas present. A warm smile across mother's face as he rips the paper from the giant box, and his eyes glisten straight from his heart, shreds on the floor; her dress is gone and she is bare.

Every night she confronted the grinning monster in the mirror, she saw her blood flow across her insides, a stomach that begged for food and a heart that didn't beat quite fast enough. She knew of nothing internal, for without covering, everything inside her belonged to the world.

He edged closer to her as they continued around the block and the comfort of night decreased as the gap between them grew shorter. Her life was a game of hide and seek with only one rule; no one could ever find her.

As he closed in to her hiding spot, she dug against the dirt walls that confined her, digging deeper and deeper to stay out of the light. Behind her she could hear his soft footsteps calling out to her and her silence screamed back in desperation.

"Do you ever wonder if somewhere out there, across the stars, there is someone just like you, walking along a street, thinking the same things you are, doing the same things you are?" he asked. She took a few steps away from him to keep the distance.

"I doubt it," she replied.

"Why?" he blew smoke out through his nose and it tickled her face. His footsteps were closer and she manically clawed at the dirt, pebbles stuck under her fingernails, and a menacing laughter emitted from the falling rocks in the wall.

She shook her head, "burdens."

He knew all too well about burdens with his lizard skin. As she stared into the mirror before meeting up with him, he had too. He stared at the scaly patterns across his body, trying to make sense of the designs. He felt their hardness, like smoothed brail, before putting his clothes on and wishing he could wake up smooth.

It was days before Christmas and all around them houses gleamed with blinking lights and holiday figures guarding the lawns. He had set up his tree earlier in the day. It was taller than he had thought, and it bent at the top like a sad haircut. He stood under it, star in hand, and wondered how he could crown it properly. Finally, he placed it in the middle on a fat branch and said, "I give you heart."

She didn't have a tree this year, her mother melancholy at the table with a pile of bills, crying to long glass bottles. Her house was empty and black; the paint peeled in the hallways and the cold air seeped



in through cracks with the cockroaches. Sometimes she awoke in the middle of the night with roaches all over her, under her shirt and over her heart. They saw everything though her transparent skin; they danced on her veins and followed her blood flow like water slides. She never moved an inch.

For a long time they talked and she remained behind the wooden fence in her yard. He peered over at her but she was splinters from the neck down. He kept his coat snug and tight; the cold air dried out his scales and it irritated him. One day he asked her if she would come over the fence, if they could walk somewhere. She leaned her head out from her dirty lair, and in the split second when she experienced the sun against her face she said yes, only to quickly run back inside. When they walked around the block it was as if she carried the fence with her and each time he tried to step closer she would see hammers in his hands.

She had picked up smoking from her mother and would lock herself in her room and watch the smoke enter her lungs. She would watch them blacken, and her heart rate increase. He thought there was something beautiful about cigarettes, something aesthetic about the smoke slithering out from under his lips and the loss of care that lasted until that burning line reached the filter.

Their walks became an everyday occurrence and she started to look forward to seeing his face appear above her fence. One time, as she climbed back over the fence into her yard, she leaned over and kissed him. His mouth was the evergreen trees she and her mother used to cut down every Christmas. She held the kiss and could feel the axe in her hands, see the smile on her mother's face and then the tree falling down.

"So you really don't think..."

"No," she cut him off, "it's not that I don't think. I hope. I hope there isn't someone out there exactly like me. I wouldn't wish that for anyone."

He leaned back and stretched with a groan. Again, his steps drew a little closer but his breathing sounded sweet to her, soothing. When she looked down at his hands he wasn't holding hammers, and when she came back to herself she had already started climbing the invisible fence between them.

They held hands and he smiled, "this is nice and new."

She had stopped clawing at the dirt walls; she had stopped and sat down. She could see the slight rays of sunshine grasping the entrance and a voice outside humming a cool melody. She looked down at her hands, black fingernails that were worn and bleeding and wished there was a sink nearby.

They were back at her yard and she climbed over her fence then turned to kiss him. The kiss was pounding excitement, like bounding down the stairs on Christmas morning to see what was underneath the tree. She let go and he asked, "will you come over tomorrow for Christmas Eve?"

"Perhaps," she said. She was still edging towards the entrance, curious of the light and voice. She kept her fingers clenched to the walls and her feet still weighed like anchors.

When she walked inside her house, her mother was sleeping with the long glass bottles. She went upstairs, lay on her bed and dreamt of a girl's night. She dreamt of being surrounded

by girls with budding breasts and letting their secrets spill out across their sleeping bags. Girls named Therese, Kelsey, and Amy. They all chatted in their t-shirts and underwear because that is what boys want, girls in their underwear. She was all the rage, all eyes on her; Therese stopped painting her nails and Kelsey stopped combing her hair and Amy stopped twirling hers and all of them stared and said, "You are so beautiful. We're so jealous." Then Therese cupped her breasts and said, "my boobs are way too small." She giggled with the rest of the girls and they turned the lights off. Morning came in the dream and when she woke the girls still slept. She slid down her underwear and took her t-shirt off, because that is what boys wanted, naked girls. She paraded over the sleeping girls and her heart was hidden, her blood veiled, and they all watched, even with their eyes closed.

He was home and stared at the ceiling. He wondered if she could love a lizard, if she could rub his scales and be pleased by it. Downstairs his tree sighed but its heart glistened, and so did his when he thought of her. He rolled over in his bed and shut his eyes as the memory of her kiss lulled him to sleep.

She woke and was alone, her imaginative sleepover gone. He slept through the afternoon then went to her fence to wait. He waited and waited but she never came. He looked into her windows but didn't see her walking around. He rubbed his head and walked back home, slouched with his hands in his pockets. It was Christmas Eve and all the houses jumped; the inhabitants partied and kissed and exchanged gifts while his house frowned with darkened windows.

When he walked in and turned on the lights, there she was under the tree. She was in her party dress with a bow on her head and a gift tag tied around her wrist. She didn't move, she didn't smile, and her fingers weren't clenched in dirt. He stared at her for a moment then sat down next to the tree.

He picked up the tag and read his name. He grabbed her by her feet and pulled her out from the tree bottom and she still remained motionless. He pulled the bow off her head then grabbed a pair of scissors and started to cut up the seam in her dress. He ripped the dress off her and saw her heart as it thumped wildly about, saw her blackened lungs, saw the blue lines of her blood running throughout her body and he said, "I'm glad you didn't bring the fence with you."

She smiled and reached over to unbutton his coat. She pulled his shirt and pants off and looked him up and down. They kissed and fell and rolled under the tree. They made love under the branches and the heart of the tree slipped forward and crashed to the floor. The light faded into the carpet, while his heart illuminated his scales. Hers burned bright too; he could see it.



Girl (2005)

by Megan Baldonado

Dedicated to Jamaica Kincaid

This is how you overcome the impossible. You believe in yourself and do what you must. This is how you succeed. You dream with your heart but plan with your head. This is how your family loves you. Their love lasts forever and never disappears. This is how he will love you, as long as you make him happy. And then you'll realize that no man will love you like your family. This is how you become well-rounded. You dance to the stars and sing with the oceans, you remember the name of every leaf in your garden, you keep stones in a safe and pray in the open air. You involve yourself with what is going on in your community, you do volunteer work, you will culture yourself in art, music, cities, anything that can peak your interests. This is how you become educated. You will want to go to college or make a classroom out of the world. This is how you will learn your social limits. You'll stay away from drugs and alcohol and become intoxicated with your dreams; you let your mind take you where it will carry you. That's how you will keep your focus. This is how you learn, by keeping yourself wanting to know more. This is how you apply for jobs. You will find an occupation that will not degrade your mind, body, or soul. You will find a job that will not make you feel alone when you're in a room filled with people. You will never trade your face (or any other part) for a handful of coins. This is how you prepare for rejection. Learn that rejection won't end you. Learn to appreciate the rejection and build into the layers of your flesh, but never stop looking for the acceptance letter to come in the mail. This is how

you find your identity. Move away from home your first year of college. The emotional shock could be overwhelming, but it will not break you; it will only make you stronger. This is how you handle your independence. You'll make new friends. You'll learn the effects of choosing them without mom or dad. This is how you'll realize your individuality. When you go out shopping and you want to go to Hot Topic but your friends want to go to Dooney & Burke. This is how you'll stay up all night with your girlfriends and dye your hair. And then, when you get her back for dyeing your hair the wrong color. This is how you'll handle heartbreak, with a huge tub of ice cream and the couch all to yourself, ready with a stack of movies on the table. This is how you'll bring yourself back up after you've fallen down. You tell yourself that going through this will be worth it in the end. This is how you overcome your parents' criticism. You learn to take what you need and discard what you don't. This is how you fall in love; you open up your heart and you'll know you're in love when you're ready to be hurt, but don't fear it. This is how you get married. You find the one that loves you back, and never lets the hurt attack. This is what you'll do, girl. This is how you'll get strong, grow smart, blaze trails, leave marks, lead, become, defy, invent, inspire; this is how you'll honor the title of Girl and be promoted to Womanhood. And if you don't, that's not ok.



Ignominy

by Zona N. Sullivan

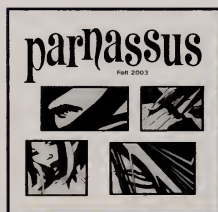
She spent her days in endless ignominy, possibly of the soul. She had one thought that pervaded her consciousness. She had to get back into the past.

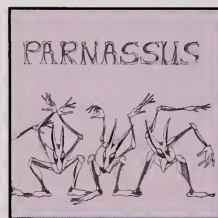
Even Einstein had surmised it was impossible. You could go into the future, but never the past. If you traveled faster than the speed of light, you could slow down time, to the point of stopping it, no time, no aging. But, the problem was you would come back to earth at about the age you left, but only in the future, not the past.

Her mind was a turning collage of people and events, but everything was all mixed up. Was she remembering the past as it was, or as she remembered it? She couldn't be sure.

A neo-non-solution was the philosopher, Nietzsche, and his law of eternal return. Man comes back, and repeats his life over and over, but with no insights into changing anything.

So, there was no way back, no second chances; even if you repeat your life, you do so with no previous insights. It has to be resolved in one place, your mind. But, how to do it?





The Brick

by Richard Fahey

Once in awhile, from time to time, truth becomes inanimate. Not some intangible ideology or some amorphous principle articulated by the physicist, but something codified in structure. Such was the case for brick # 38-17 at the Spurk building lobby.

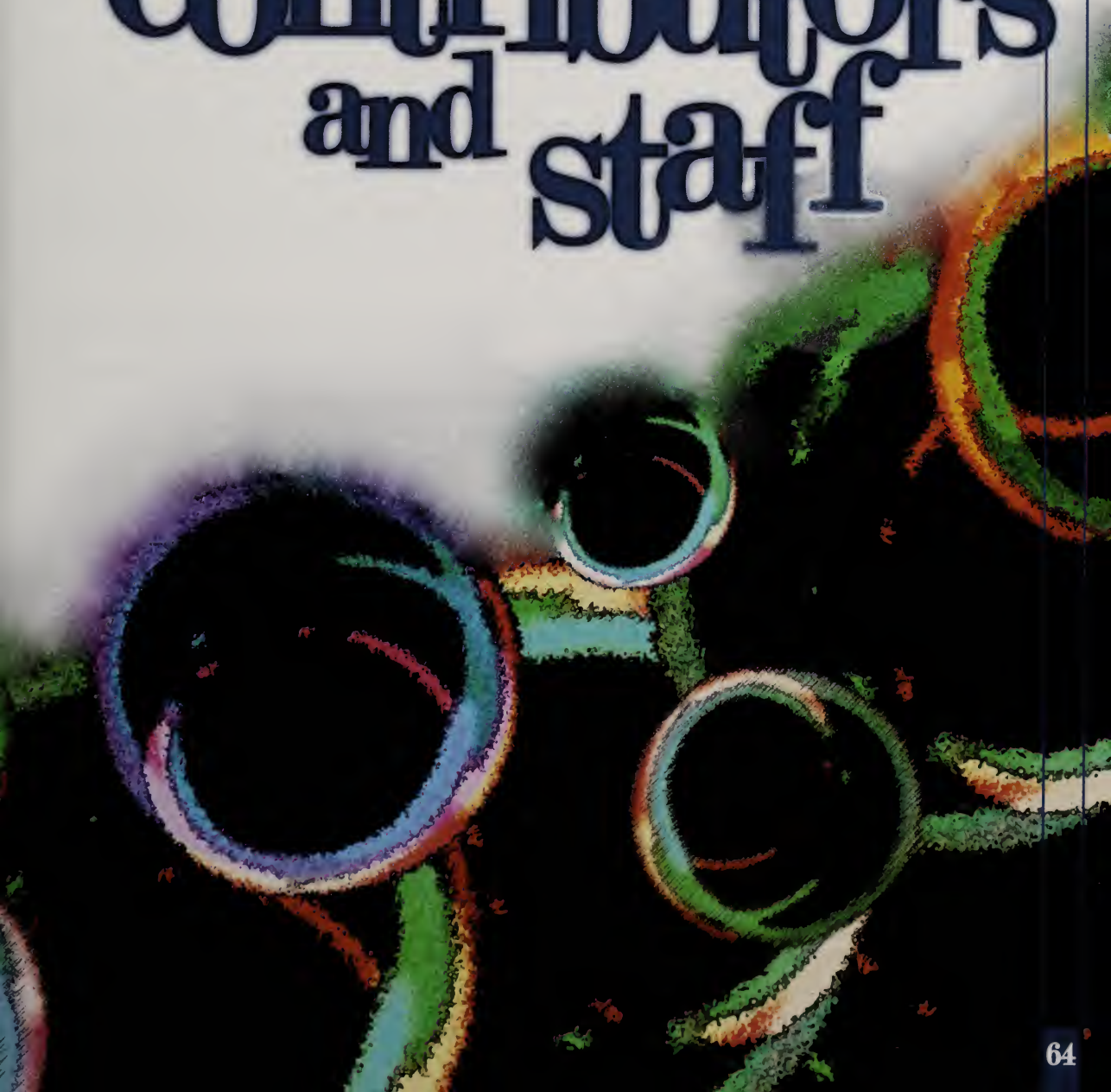
Our brick was sharp. Not by mistake did it have the mathematical symbol for pi on its face, for pi is a representation of both the limits and expansiveness of this dimension. It had its earmarks of the human: round corners on its right, cleft diagonal on its upper left, and vapid discolorations on its face, red its center, dark brown its edges.

The brick knew everything, which is to say it knew no-thing. It had no purpose lest this wall, this chink of wall. It existed in ecstasy, a perpetual rapture. Scoffing at the moments sublime, laughing at the tickling sensation of its own atoms, this brick needed nothing.

It was not distinguished, for as mortar bonds one to another, it too was bonded, but bonded in such a way that it was devoid of any demarcation, abstract or reality. A discoloration, a cleft, a pi-shaped image were all banalities of its three dimensional aspect. Within its charge though were elements so diverse and indistinguishable as to be invisible to the ignorant. That the poor and tawdry minds of men cannot perceive the true nature of such a brick is testament to a vanity inherent in existence.

Descartes lived before as a brick and ceased to exist as one who ceases to think. There is no moral, no philosophy, nor hidden code in this expository. As with our brick #38-17, matter is specious and oblique, and lest one can conceive of that which it is not any further discourse is folly.

Contributors and staff



Diannely Antigua is an eighteen-year-old girl in her fourth and almost final semester at NECC. She will be graduating in December with an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts. Many of her works include short stories, essays, poetry, and photography. She owes much of her success in poetry to one of her favorite professors, Ginger Hurajt. ("Ginger, you rock!"). She craves Haverhill Jade Chinese food at two AM and is obsessed with mechanical pencils. Writing is such a crucial part of her life. Her romance with words began when she was nine years old when she got her first journal for Christmas. "Writing in my journal just made every emotion, whether it were joy or misery, seem all the more real. My journals were not a place where I escaped into a make-believe world, but rather they were the place that I escaped to find the truth, to find reality." To learn more about Diannely, visit her website at www.freewebs.com/nellfell13.

Alex Aro is an aspiring writer at NECC. He plans to return to Chester College to continue his education and is currently working on publishing a collection of short stories.

James Barrile is currently finishing a graphic design/visual arts dual major at NECC. He is a relatively recent transplant to the New England area, having been born in Long Island and raised in Ithaca, New York. It was in Ithaca that he met his wife Minden. They are the parents of a wonderful nine-year-old boy who is immeasurably supportive of his father's artistic attempts. Jim is planning on transferring to a four year art school to pursue a BFA and possibly continue his education afterward in an MFA program.

Ralph Basiliere is thirty-three, a lover of beaches, live rock, and is a General Studies (Nsg) Major. One critic said, "He's inimitable, well trekked, with susceptible insight set to prose; he has the poet's blade." He admits, "I'm a closet writer, stirred to publish by my professor- Rex Cozzens." "Jellybean" is from his sketchbook, *Cherry Boy*; it's held to be a sparsely cloaked lyric about his searing tryst with an undisclosed vamp with a red bedroom. Basiliere states, "It's didactic, about *C. Bottulinium*- and perhaps, of love sublime in the rear view mirror."

Jess Beckford is a General Studies major who will eventually transfer. Jess thinks, breathes, swallows, and laughs. Jess enjoys hot peppers, learning, various arts, rock formations, and science.

Sarah Brent is a twenty-three-year old ECE student from Haverhill. She likes to create and be alive.

Cheryl Comeau, an up and coming artist with little formal training in her younger years, has a deep understanding of color and shadow. She has an unbridled desire to capture the rich visual images in the world around her, from her perspective, for all to see. She works in all mediums and has had great success in the majority of them. A talent shown early, recently enhanced at NECC, is what has been captured here and what you will enjoy viewing.

Candice Cote is a twenty-four year old Visual Arts Major from Haverhill, MA. After graduation from NECC in May 2008, she will be attending Merrimack College to continue her education as a Digital/Mixed Media Arts Major.

Mary Ellen D'Angelo-Lombardi is a fledgling author. She extracts solitary time to write from her busy schedule as a wife, mom of three boys, special education school bus driver, gardener, and reader. She likens the difficulty of this process to extracting an impacted wisdom tooth. Of all the joys she tumbles upon in all of her pursuits, the conversations generated by her art and all forms of art are some of her greatest.

Meghan Dempsey is in her second semester as part of the *Parnassus* staff. She believes an individual's writing tells a lot about that person. Everything she writes, she tries to make a reflection of who she is and how she feels at that particular moment. She tends to be full of contrasting ideas and emotions, which almost always comes out in her writing. She joined *Parnassus* because she found it very interesting reading others' writing once the magazine was published. She decided she wanted to be a part of the creative process of putting together such an interesting reflection of the writing of other students. Other than writing and *Parnassus*, this is her third semester at NECC, majoring in Psychology and Biology. She plans on transferring to UMass Amherst to receive a degree in Neuropsychology.

Christian Dunbar is an International Relations major at NECC with a keen interest in history, literature, and politics, both academically and recreationally.

Richard Fahey is a second semester student at NECC. His future plans are to transfer and complete his undergraduate studies, perhaps in English, perhaps to teach. He enjoys the English language, and those who craft such eloquence with it.

Anthony Gan enjoys artistic expression and travels along the path as a wordsmith.

Linda Germain is a mixed media artist and teacher. She creates multi-layered pieces in response to the textures and surfaces that surround her studio. Rusted metal, wilted leaves, and tangled threads are often a source of inspiration for her. If you are interested in seeing more of her work or taking a workshop, please go to www.linda-germain.com.

Sophia Herring is a 19 year old freshman at Northern Essex. She is a painter and photographer that is inspired by Andy Warhol and the photographer David LaChapelle.

Justin Ingaharro is an engineering student who is trying to break the boundaries of reality by mixing engineering and art... it's gonna take awhile.

Carolyn Jarvis-McManus loves being creative, and art is definitely her channeling device. She has done tons of work in a variety of mediums, as far as drawing and painting go, and she is taking a new direction with photography. It's proving to be very worthwhile; picking out a field of view for her photos is exciting for her. It's different than trying to paint a likeness of something, instead, a new way at looking at art is giving people a new way to look at things they see.

Jess Jensen is twenty years old. She has much love from her family and friends. What she has is what she wants. "Nothing in life is ever easy."

Jeff LeBlanc is a human being with a creative passion for graphic design, logic, and information architecture.

Sam McCarthy is a fan of art, Bob Dylan, & ampersands.

Lindsay Meredith is a Visual Arts major, but also considers herself a student of life. She plans on continuing to develop herself as an artist and hopes to travel the world. "It is right it should be so; Man was made for joy and woe; And when this we rightly know, Thro' the world we safely go." - William Blake

Joel Pecci is twenty-six years old. Spending time with his son Tyler and drawing are his two main passions. Currently, he is double majoring in Illustration and Graphic Design while focusing on transferring to a four year Art School. You can never predict how things will turn out, so live in the moment and enjoy life to the fullest.

Christopher Powell is a twenty-one-year-old sophomore studying in computer networking. He enjoys writing, trivia, socializing, drum and bass music, long walks on the beach, and dinners by candlelight. His friends describe their initial reactions to him as, "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Chris, and Hell followed with him."

Dan Racite is the calamitous commodore that conspires to wake the night. Charged with the insurmountable weight to weld the cosmic universal, he is prepared to set forth on his journey to the unperceived bowels of the unknown. Fresh from the deadly rank clutches of time immemorial, he pursues his calling of Graphic Design. He is now masterminding a plot to the beyond and holds true to wage against the tides of abomination.

Corey Rappsilber is.... that's it, he just is. Why does it have to be more than that? He hates this Myspace/internet like info/bio crap. How can he describe himself... that is just ludicrous. The things that can be said via writing to describe himself would not do him justice; it would be just a brief physical description, anyway. If you want to get to know him, then just freaking ask... and don't go looking to be his "friend" on Myspace or something. What happened to personal communication between people? We are already a distance society; why perpetuate it further?

Karina Rodriguez is a dreamer, free-spirited, mystique, rebel, and confused being whose life has been that of a gypsy. She has found her way out of this shallow minded culture through her voice in writing. She loves the Mirabal Sisters, Salvador Dali, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sor Juana Ines, spoken poetry, Robi Draco Rosa, and Emily Dickinson. She's infatuated with the words freedom, love, peace, respect, transformation, womanhood, and death. She loves dancing to drums, world music, elephants, snakes, and frogs. She dislikes silence in others because it is the biggest liar, yet loves to meditate when alone. She hates the degeneration of humanity as a result of materialism, capitalism, ignorance, and lack of spirituality. She lives in a magical place called, "Karina makes no one her priority," but yet she loves her family. She hopes to one day write the most meaningless masterpiece and call it her autobiography.

Katelyn Salerno is a Graphic Design Major. In her spare time she likes to draw, paint, and read. She always has her camera with her in case she sees something that would make a good picture.

Artemis (Alita) Savory is a raving lunatic who enjoys howling at the moon on warm summer nights, running barefoot through the halls of NECC, and snapping at her stepsister on occasion. She has the uncanny ability to write heart-wrenching poetry, shockingly dark stories, and stupid personal bios. Some describe her as “eccentric”; others prefer the term “crazy.” Her favorite food is nonexistent because she doesn’t have the money to afford it; however, she jumps at the opportunity of a “free” buffet if one is daring enough to offer. She will be attending UMass Amherst next semester and says, “Goddess bless” to all the feminist-haters at NECC.

Maryanne Scatamacchia is a resident of Haverhill, MA, graduated from Bradford Jr. College and Merrimack College, retired from Verizon, and began attending art classes at NECC last fall.

Zona Sullivan loves to explore the world of imagination through her writing. Her best friend once described her a “perennial teenager.”

Aura Valdes is a poet/musician who was once described as the love child of Jim Morrison and Frida Kahlo. She has been writing poetry for the past eighteen years. Aura has shared the mic with many local writers, and artists over the last decade and is continuing to expand her writing/performing into the Boston area. When not being a student, she can be found riding the rails, creating pipe-cleaner animals with five-year-olds, and dancing in the arms of her everyday muse. “And the day came when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” -Anais Nin

Tom Whalen entered college later in life, (but not toooo much later), not knowing what he wanted to be when he grew up. After sampling an assortment of writing possibilities through NECC’s writing option, he decided to switch gears and dive into English and Literature for his next rung up the scholastic ladder, eventually receiving his M.A. and beyond. Along with two of the three “R’s”, Tom enjoys grilling, football, gardening, moonlit lakes, fields of wildflowers, mountain ranges, thunderstorms, and just gettin’ down and dirty in the great outdoors; he does not enjoy math (sorry Coach, Jim), waiting, or dress-up affairs. Although Tom is chompin’ at the bit for summer vacation, he is looking forward to returning in the fall for his final semester at NECC. Tom currently resides in Amesbury, MA.



Parnassus

Parnassus

2007 - 2008 staff

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How to contribute

Contributions to *Parnassus* are limited to students, staff, and faculty of Northern Essex Community College and are accepted each semester in the areas of fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, art, and photography. Entries are reviewed and voted upon democratically by the editorial staff, an enchanted grouping open to all NECC students. Submission deadlines will be announced around campus each semester, and *Parnassus* will be published each spring. Entries can be submitted in the designated *Parnassus* boxes on each campus, or via email to Professor Patrick Lochelt at: plochelt@necc.mass.edu. For each entry, please include name, title, and email or phone number.

